HARI KUNZRU'S NOVELS: A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

A SYNOPSIS
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Arts

स्वामी रामानंद तीर्थ
मराठवाडा विद्यापीठ,नांदेड.

SWAMI RAMANAND TEERTH
MARATHWADA UNIVERSITY, NANDED

by
Nousheen Farha Abdul Aala

under the guidance of
Dr. Prafull D. Kulkarni
Assistant Professor,
Sharadchandra College,
Naigaon (Bz.), Dist. Nanded

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1. Preliminaries

Kinship and marriage are the serious matters in India. Bloodlines and caste lines are guarded with fanatic zeal by most Indians except those who tainted by western mores. And even they are directed by subliminal orthodoxies. No fate can be worse than losing your caste either by marrying someone from a different race, region, or caste, or by being born a half-caste.

The good news is that there is no stopping love, lust, and the call of the chromosomes. A growing number of Indians are throwing caution to the winds, as there are so many people who are half-caste, too as is Hari Kunzru the author of my novels, which I have chosen for my thesis. But our identities are not limited.

Indian writing in English, which has commended unstinted admiration in both home and abroad, is now in its full swing. It has curved out a new track, a new vision, a vision that is replete with an unswerving faith and hope, myths and traditions, customs and rites our great country has enriched in her bosom from time immemorial. If we dive deep into the works are not an imitation of English literary pattern but highly original and intensely Indian in both theme and spirit. They have given a new shape colour to English literature in the same way as Australians and Americans have evolved their own literature in their respective countries.

In its early stages , the Indian writings in English were heavily influenced by the western art form of the novel. It was typical for the early Indian English language writers to use English unadulterated by Indian words to convey experiences that were primarily Indian. The core reason behind this step was the fact most of the readers were either British or British educated Indians. In the coming century, the writing were largely confined to writing history chronicles and government gazettes.

The present study aims at exploration of the nature and functions of search for identity and self for survival in literature, in general, and in

literature, and in Indian writers in English, especially Hari Kunzru. An attempt has been made to examine, scrutinize and analyze the passages replete with search for identity and self for survival in his novels. For the purpose of study, various passages from Hari Kunzru's *The Impressionist(*2003) ,*Transmission* (2005), *My Revolutions* (2007) and *Gods Without Men* (2011).

Literature is a truthful expression of life through the medium of language. Its success lies in blending both art and morality in such a beautiful way that art, in the long run, becomes the thought. Novel is a product of post colonialism in India. It has come through English language and western education. Its progress in India due to the liberal thought from the west, which again is a product of post colonialism.

The brief survey of Indo-Anglican fictions clearly shows that Indian novelists have acquired an immutable and inevitable place in the realm of English fictions. They are being conferred on not only national but also international awards.

All of them have collectively tried their best to portray as well as expose the realistic picture of superstition, corruption and hypocrisy; a society confronted by the big guns who never hesitate inflict insult and abuse, taunts and torture to the weak and the vulnerable, a society, suffering from the disease of untouchability, gender discrimination and identity.

The present thesis will portrait the concerns for those who are forced to live on the margins of society with little or no rights at all are far from being merely literary.

2. Self For Survival And Search For Identity: An overview

In today's multicultural society' groups and individuals identify themselves and live within the context of their ethnicity, race, class, culture, identity and gender. A clearer understanding of the terms and

how they are interlinked, also how the role of religion plays a part within this framework can help schools to promote tolerance and acceptance of a rich diversity of people both throughout the curriculum and within their establishment.

Any individual can identify himself or herself on a myriad of levels: in a personal sense, a social sense, on an ethnic, cultural, spiritual or religious basis and by way of their moral values. As a consequence, identities can be seen as flexible or even conflicting with no one person's identity being the same as another and each person having their own unique mix of allegiances. In order for any individual to feel valued all of these separate themes need to be acknowledged. Jim Cummins, a philosopher and a critic suggests,

Affirmation of identity thus refers to the establishment of the respect and trust between educators and student. (Negotiating Identities: Education for empowerment in a Diverse Society,p.21.)

Therefore proposing that shared understanding of a individual's perspectives is critical to the approval of their personal identity. Furthermore, the negotiation of an individual's identity has far reaching effects for their sense of self and both personal and social aspirations.

Each of us has a complex identity that is rooted in human differences such as gender, class, race, sexuality, disability, religion, nationality, age and ethnicity. The ways in which all of these various categories intersect with and inform our individual lives creates the uniqueness of each of us. Locating oneself is a term that encourages us to look at the historical and social components of our identities, including how we came to be the person we are.

When we begin to realize that all identities are complex and varied, including our own, our methods of investigating other perspectives and viewpoints are enhanced and developed. This kind of intellectual expertise can easily be translated into daily skills: questioning media's representation of a country or people, or listening more carefully to classmates or friends who seem different than us. All of us are members of various groups, although no membership is static and constant. Our membership in groups or categories may change over time, be voluntary and offer us solidarity and camaraderie, or may seem forced and unyielding like a too-tight pair of shoes. Based on how we understand ourselves and our identities, we form alliances with others. In the same way Kunzru also shows the impact of race, culture, identity on world through his novels.

3. Various aspects of search of identity and self for survival by Hari Kunzru

Hari Kunzru's writings explore the controversial legacies of colonialism and empire and the impact of today's globalised world on the formation of individual identities. He explores the nature of identity. For some people a sense of belonging is very strong, where as for other such feelings are mere illusion. The former group may cite social group, language culture or religion as evidence of their stance, while the latter group perhaps may cite exactly the same subject matter to prove the opposite.

Kunzru's evocative stories work on several different levels. Raising questions as to what it means to be black and white, Indian or English. Set against India's independence movement, novels also examines an individual's place in society and the personal and political ramifications for adopting or challenging the status quo.

But Kunzru's characters aren't merely vehicles for exploring deeper notions of race and ethnicity, rather they are luminous and richly drawn often in possession of an individual depth that breaths life into this lavish engaging read.

As we follow *The Impressionist* on his personal travels through multiple identities we are challenged by the transformation. They are opened up by chance encounters but yet they also seem investable. We are thus encouraged to look at our own lives and ask how many times we might have changed our own spots. A reader with a strong sense of identity might find such a challenge quite threatening.

Kunzru has nailed the reflexive provinciality and entitlement of English to the wall. Appropriating the theme of passing, a recurring motif in ethnic literature, Kunzru's epic first novel, *The Impressionist*, shows the absurdity of a world based on racial classifications and challenges the institutions of the British Empire exposing their oppressive and cruel foundations.

Transmissions, his second novel, shifts its focus from the British Empire to our contemporary world dominated by a different, but equally lethal, type of empire, that of powerful transnational corporations.

My Revolutions, third novel, continues to explore the auth0r's concern on identity and changing relationship between the mainstream and the counterculture starting from the 60s and 70s up to the 1990s.

Kunzru's fourth novel, *Gods Without Men* is a frisky stab at the great American novel from a non-American. The book's big themes reiterate Hari Kunzru's established interests: cross-cultural power struggles.

Identity, especially one that is formed in strange borders of post colonial world, is one of the most popular themes in the contemporary literature. To question oneself about the meaning of ones own behaviour, repetitive language, is to question oneself about the whole wide world out there.

The most wonderful aspect of these novels are the reader's slowly growing awareness that this is not just another plot-driven novels with exotic locations and an unusual protagonist facing life-changing decisions, however fascinating they may be.

Besides the theme of mixed identities and racial clashes, the pervasive imposition of colonial forces, like that of the English, on those colonized is also significant throughout the novels.

From the mid-twentieth century to the present, there has been an increasing tendency among academic historians to focus their studies upon issues of race, class and gender. This trend can be seen as a result of both the equal rights movements of the 1960s that worked to expose historical processes of oppression, and the emergence of new theoretical frameworks that focus upon humans' social identity.

Most contemporary theories are largely influenced by the post-World War II intellectual movements of structuralism and post-structuralism. These movements posited human identity as the product of cultural and historical systems. Michel Foucalt, one of the foremost thinkers associated with post-structuralism, examined the relationship between knowledge and power in history and the ways that these two forces work to construct human identity.

This is the process that he is referring to when he claims, in somewhat esoteric language, that 'it is a matter of depriving the subject of its role as originator, and of analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse. The notion of socially and historically constructed identities has a particular resonance for contemporary academics engaged in the critical study of race. In their highly influential essay, '*Racial Formation,*' Michael Omi and Howard Winant assert:

> "Although the concept of race invokes biologically based human characteristics, selection of these particular human features for purposes of racial signification is always necessarily a social and historical process."
>
> (Racial Formation: page 27.)

To argue against a biological basis for racial categorization is not to say that the concept of race does not play a significant role in the structure of contemporary society. Therefore, the task of the historian who subscribes to the idea of race as a socially constructed category of identity is to discover the historical processes that have contributed to its construction.

The influence of structuralism and post structuralism on feminist and Marxist theorists has produced similar studies of the historical and social construction of gender and class differences as are common in discussions of race. Although gender is a category more firmly rooted in biological origin, many contemporary theorists view ideas of masculinity and femininity as socially determined and as connected to the workings of power in society. Given the historical oppression of women and people of colour, it is often impossible for historians to speak of race and gender without addressing corresponding issues of class difference and economic disparity.

4. OBJECTIVES OF RESEARCH TOPICS:

1. To understand, analyze and interpret the concept of identity, culture, race and ethnicity with reference to the selected works of Hari Kunzru.
2. To give outline of search for identity and self for survival and mark it as a one of the essential aspect of Indian writing in English.

3. To comprehend Identity as it is reflected in the selected works of Hari Kunzru.
4. To trace out elements of identity and self for survival of the protagonists in novels of Hari Kunzru.
5. To compare and contrast the thematic aspects in the selected works under scrutiny.

5. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Philip Spires published *The Impressionist by Hari Kunzru* in which he tried to show the realistic picture of society on the basis of identity. R Brock in his journal An "onerous citizenship" : Globalization, cultural flows and the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Hari Kunzru's Transmission , explore postcolonial elements. A Robinson's Faking It: simulation and self fashioning, explain about the identity of a protagonist in Transmission. Number of other secondary sources are their which discuss about the identity in the light of Kunzru's work.

6. Scope and Limitations of the Study

The present research work aims to focus on investigation of self for survival and search for identity by the protagonists in the novels of Hari Kunzru. For the purpose of study four novels of author have been selected. The novels are; *The Impressionist* (2003), *Transmission* (2005), *My Revolution* (2007) and *Gods Without Men* (2011).

It is proposed to study the selected novels by the writer under scrutiny. The characters or protagonists on the basis of psychological variable, consciousness would be categorized, analyzed and evaluated from gender, racial, cultural perspective.

However due to various elements in themes and number of aspects to discuss in novels, the search is limited up to “Identity and Self for Survival” of the characters.

7. Hypothesis

This reach work explore the themes of identity, racial discrimination, class and some elements regarding gender discrimination in selected work of Hari Kunzru. His writing exemplifies the difficulties of a common man in a society. The characters under scrutiny reflect under pressure of society with different perspective. Kunzru, point out the issues of investigation of self for survival in a modern society by his impressive stories. The protagonists in the works of Hari Kunzru points out the searching of identity, trying to make good position or place in society, and fight against the superstitious and narrow thinking of people.

8. Justification

Kunzru deals with the lives of persons as a slave or who are trapped in society’s rubbish and superstitious thinking. Kunzru as a modern writer deals with the concept of racial discrimination and people who are searching their identity on society’s perspective to live in it peacefully.

The present investigation from the perspective of search for identity and self for survival, concentrates on characters from the selected novels. This investigation would encourage further research from similar perspective.

9. Methodology

The researcher has selected various passages from the selected novels of Hari Kunzru. Elements will be developed which will comprise of Search for Identity And Self for Survival and its exploration in the selected novels. The selected novels will be investigated in an order of their occurrence in the novels

that helps to maintain the development of the plot. The selected passages will be analyzed in the light of Self for Survival, which will be preceded by a brief introduction and followed by a conclusion.

10. Significance of the Study

Present study is an investigation in the process of Self for Survival and Search for Identity in the novels of Hari Kunzru. It is an attempt to extend the theory of Identity and racial discrimination and give it more importance by discussing it in concrete terms. The study is an attempt to add a new link to the chain of research work made in Indian English Literature in general. The study of these elements helps to aware people about inner mentality of common people which are also somewhere in our personality, which we deny to accept. The researcher will analyse different material in terms of their functions and intended effects for which they are designed. The aim of this research is to aware people about our mentality and behaviour towards the people who are half-caste or who don't know their proper identity in the light and reference to the Indian English Literature..This thesis will help readers to excite and encourage them to read Indian Literature and novels.

Proposed Chapter Scheme

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter will discuss and survey the history of Indian English Literature and more focus on the history of fiction in Indian Literature. Apart from this it will provide comprehensive introductory explanation of Search for Identity and Self for Survival in Hari Kunzru's perspective.

Chapter II : Review of Literature

Chapter III: Theoretical Background

This chapter will explore a theoretical base to the study where an explanation of the concept of Identity and Self for survival will be given. It will also identify Hari Kunzru as a one of the novelist of high merit. It will provide the relevance of study and offer the brief summaries of selected novels.

Chapter IV: Exploration of Search for Identity and Self for Survival in The Impressionist and Transmission

This chapter will offer the comprehensive exploration of the Identity and Self for Survival in the novels *The Impressionist* and *Transmission* by Hari Kunzru.

Chapter V: Exploration of Search for Identity and Self for Survival in *My Revolution* and *Gods Without Men*

This chapter will provide the concept of Identity in a complicated and different manner, which Kunzru has used through his characters in these novels. It will expose the thinking of modern men about racial discrimination.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

This chapter will include the brief survey of entire process of investigation as well as the general summary of research experience. It will put forward the conclusions drawn from the present study followed by authentic bibliography.

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12.	**SIGNATURE OF THE CANDIDATE**	**:**	
13.	**REMARKS OF THE GUIDE**	**:**	
14.	**NAME AND DESIGNATION OF GUIDE** **SIGNATURE OF GUIDE**	**:**	**Dr. Prafull D. Kulkarni** Assistant Professor, Sharadchandra College, Naigaon (Bz.), Dist. Nanded.
15.	**REMARKS OF DIRECTOR/ PRINCIPAL** **SIGNATURE**	**:**	**Dr. Ramesh Dhage** Associate Professor &Director, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Vishnupuri, Nanded - 431 606. **(Seal of the School/Institute)**